



MINUTES

Visit SLO CAL Executive Committee

Visit SLO CAL Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, September 9, 2021

3:00pm

The Kinney SLO, 1800 Monterey St, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Videoconference: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87075417886> Meeting ID: 870 7541 7886

1. CALL TO ORDER: Aaron Graves

PRESENT: Mark Eads, Aaron Graves, Clint Pearce

PRESENT (VIDEOCONFERENCE): Amar Sohi

ABSENT: Hemant Patel

STAFF PRESENT: Chuck Davison, Cathy Cartier, Brendan Pringle

Call to Order at 3:12pm.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT (On Non-Agenda Items)

None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

CONSENT AGENDA

3. Approval of August 19, 2021 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

4. Approval of July Visit SLO CAL Financials

5. Approval of FY 2021 Annual Report – *item held*

Davison noted that the FY 2021 Annual Report Consent Agenda item is being held until the September 29, 2021 Board meeting.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion.

ACTION: Moved by Pearce/Eads to approve the Consent Agenda as adjusted to include only the August 19, 2021 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes and the July 2021 Visit SLO CAL Financials.

Motion carried: 3:0
Sohi joined the meeting after this vote.

CEO REPORT

6. CEO Report

Davison asked the Committee if they were comfortable with Visit SLO CAL's Chief Marketing Officer, Cathy Cartier, participating in future Committee meetings. He noted that she will be covering the "Land Of" Campaign Update business item in this meeting. Davison provided an update on Visit SLO CAL's FY 2021 Audit. As part of their review, Glenn Burdette, requested all FY 2021 TMD remittance receipts, which has delayed the delivery timeline of the audit. Communities had until the end of August to provide June receipts, and all except Grover Beach provided remittances, to-date. We are actively following up with Grover Beach to finalize. The draft audit report was provided to staff for review this week, and the final audit report will be in the September Board agenda packet. Erin Nagle of Glenn Burdette will be presenting the findings of the audit at the Board meeting on September 29, 2021. Davison outlined some of the key updates in the draft audit, including updates to how revenue is recorded at year-end, as well as the recording of accrued vacation, sick leave and other employee compensation that will be payable in the future. Davison shared an update on national travel trends in July, and shared the STR report for the week ending September 4, 2021. He provided an update on air service, noting that cuts to daily air service from San Diego (4 weekly flights starting October 6) and Portland (5 weekly flights starting October 6) are not related to poor performance, but rather due to pilot shortages at Horizon and Skywest, as Santa Barbara Airport is experiencing the same reductions. Visit SLO CAL is working with Mering to adjust its marketing campaign allocations accordingly. Davison also noted that the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors approved an agreement to centralize marketing efforts and messaging for outbound and inbound service, using Mering (Visit SLO CAL's agency) to facilitate the work. The agreement is expected to be finalized in the coming days. Davison announced that the Destination Summit (scheduled for November 10, 2021), has been postponed due to current COVID-19 conditions, but staff will send a Save the Date once it's been rescheduled. Based on the current state of the pandemic and the continued adjustment to US traveler requirements for entrance into parts of the European Union, Visit SLO CAL has decided to postpone the UK Trade & Media Mission, which was previously scheduled for late October; staff will provide an update once this event is rescheduled. An agreement is being finalized with Coyle Hospitality to conduct a monthly Mystery Shopper program as part of Visit SLO CAL's sponsorship agreement with the South County Chambers of Commerce. The program is set to launch October 15, 2021.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion.

BUSINESS ITEMS

7. Staffing Update

Davison noted that Emily Rudge will begin on October 11, 2021 as Executive Assistant to the President & CEO, and that Visit SLO CAL is currently sourcing candidates for the Marketing Coordinator role. Davison also outlined a requested adjustment to the Finance & HR Manager role that was originally approved by the Board in January 2021. After consulting with Visit SLO CAL's contracted controller, he noted that he believes a more senior finance role is necessary and required, pointing to the organization's budget of more than \$9 million, and some efficiency gaps in current financial processes with the team. He recommended the adjustment of the position from Finance & HR Manager to Vice President of Finance, and noted the proposed salary range adjustment. Davison outlined the key responsibilities of the proposed role, and added that the role would also provide a strong financial resource, particularly to department heads managing their department budget, and elevate the level of engagement and oversight in our finances. Davison noted that he requested initial approval from the Board Chair prior to finalizing the job description and posting the position on August 27, 2021, but that staff is seeking full Executive Committee approval for an adjustment to the role before moving forward.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion.

ACTION: Moved by Pearce/Eads to approve the adjustment from the previously-approved Finance & HR Manager role to a Vice President of Finance role.

Motion carried: 4:0

8. Amendment to Visit SLO CAL's 401k Plan

Davison provided background on Visit SLO CAL's current 401k plan, which enrolls employees automatically at the 12-month mark and fully vests them after 12 additional months. He noted that this has become an issue during recruitment, as contribution to a 401k plan prior to the 12-month mark can be an important factor in the decision making process, and that this current structure does not encourage saving for newly-hired employees. Davison worked with Principal and Morgan Stanley on an amendment to VSC's current plan, that would adjust the enrollment eligibility period from the current twelve (12) months to a revised three (3) months, beginning January 1, 2022, at a one-time administrative cost of \$350. This amendment would require Board approval. Increases to the budget depending on how many new employees take advantage of this new policy, would be trued up in the January budget re-forecast.

Public Comment – None

Committee Discussion.

ACTION: Moved by Eads/Sohi to recommend that the Board approve amending Visit SLO CAL's 401k Plan enrollment eligibility period from the current one-year period to a 90-day period.

Motion carried: 4:0

9. Public Policy Platform Review

Davison noted that the Advocacy Plan, adopted by the Board in September 2019, committed to an annual review of the document to ensure the platform remained consistent with the organization's values and priorities. He noted that staff is recommending no changes to the Platform. He shared the core pillars of the Platform, and pointed to the instances when the Platform was activated over the last 12 months.

Public Comment – None

Committee Discussion.

ACTION: Moved by Pearce/Eads to recommend that the Board approve maintaining the Public Policy Platform as is, without any additional changes.

Motion carried: 3:0

Sohi was not present for this vote.

10. Events & Festivals Strategy Phase I Consultant Approval

As noted at the last Committee meeting, Visit SLO CAL is pivoting to a two-phased approach to the Events & Festivals Strategy (E&FS). In Phase I, a third-party facilitator would lead a working group facilitation with an end goal of universal understanding on the importance, need and desire for a countywide Events and Festivals Strategy, as well as why it is critical to SLO CAL's success as a destination. Davison reiterated that initial buy-in and MOU sign off on the strategy is a board directive; as such, Board members would also need to advocate in their communities to garner buy-in and support from all local DMOs and cities, something that has been challenging to receive. In Phase II, the comprehensive countywide strategy will be created, informed and driven by the results of the Phase I facilitations with the E&FS working group. Since their efforts are integral to both phases, upon completion of Phase II, the E&FS working group will become ambassadors and begin implementation and adherence to the completed Strategy and countywide event calendar. Staff received two proposals for Phase I Facilitation, which are both currently under review. The proposed cost would be up to \$20,000.

Davison reviewed next steps. Assuming the Board approves the motion, invitations for the working group will be sent out following the Board meeting. He also noted that if approval is provided by the Committee, staff will begin working through the contract details in advance of the Board's approval of the cost and direction. Cartier noted that staff believes that this two-pronged approach will bring the communities together and garner more buy-in to move this initiative forward. Davison noted that the proposed change would not change the overall projected cost of the program development.

Public Comment – None

Committee Discussion.

ACTION: Moved by Pearce/Eads to recommend that the Board approve, in concept, a change in direction to a two-phased approach to the Events & Festivals Strategy, allowing the President & CEO to allocate up to \$20,000 for Phase I and to begin contract negotiations with a facilitator.

Motion carried: 3:0
Sohi was not present for this vote.

11. Customer Service Training Initiative Consultant Approval

Davison noted that the proposal vetting and review process was completed on September 1, 2021, and that staff received 4 proposals. He outlined the scope of work for the project. The selected agency will develop a no-cost web and mobile-based, certified customer service program in both English and Spanish for SLO CAL's Travel & Tourism industry. They will work with Visit SLO CAL and the Customer Service Working Group, comprised of investors and partners with a strong record of customer service, to determine customer service objectives of learning modules and drive the content development. He noted that Visit SLO CAL would lean on destination partners to inform the local expert content for the destination awareness component of the training program, which will include creative assets from throughout SLO CAL. Staff is recommending ICOM Productions (Calgary, Alberta, Canada), whose award-winning White Hat Academy provides free, customer- and destination-focused training for Calgary's 4,800 visitor-facing employees. Davison added that ICOM's proposal most closely aligned with the scope of work. He showed the Committee a brief demo of the White Hat Academy program. He outlined the timeline of the project, which if approved is expected to kick off October 2021 and is estimated to take seven months to complete. He noted that the English platform would be developed and launched first, and that the Spanish platform (which includes Spanish in the video components), would launch approximately one month after. He noted that Melissa Murray, Visit SLO CAL's Project Manager, Destination Management, will be the main point of contact for the duration of the project, with executive oversight from the CEO and the VP of Community Engagement & Advocacy, once that role is hired. He outlined the budget, and discussed next steps. He noted that in future years, Visit SLO CAL would likely budget funds for additional modules as needed. He added that if lodging investors throughout the county used this platform for on-boarding, it could transform the guest experience.

Public Comment – None

Committee Discussion.

ACTION: Moved by Eads/Pearce to recommend that the Board allow the President & CEO to begin contract negotiations with ICOM Productions to develop a countywide Customer Service Training Initiative.

Motion carried: 3:0
Sohi was not present for this vote.

12. "Land Of" Campaign Update

Cartier provided an update on Visit SLO CAL's "Land Of" campaign, launching at the end of September. She noted how the place, pace and people of SLO CAL tie into SLO CAL's brand refresh, and outlined the scope of the brand asset production. Co-op partner assets from this production are set to be delivered September 30, 2021. She provided an overview of the campaign, including messaging and static ad graphics. Davison noted that the Future Visitor Profile Study that Visit SLO CAL

conducted over the last few months confirmed Visit SLO CAL's brand messaging position. Cartier also provided an update on the House of Brands strategy, noting that it will provide a clear connection between all of the individual destination brands and SLO CAL, and a clear relationship between the communities and SLO CAL. She outlined the changes to the SLO CAL logo and the use of "The Center of California's Central Coast" as part of the SLO CAL brand refresh. She also described what destination partner logo lock-ups would look like along the adoption spectrum.

Public Comment – None

Committee Discussion.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF CLOSED SESSION ITEM

13. Employee Dismissal

CLOSED SESSION REPORT

No action was taken by the Committee during Closed Session.

Davison noted upcoming agenda items.

ADJOURNMENT

Adjourned at 5:08pm.